

# Communication Matters!

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A service for:

Michigan Rehabilitation Services

## Case Study: School Troubles—not Just for Students

- Nan Asher, Executive Director, MADHH

### Case Stories:

Since we received positive feedback on the case story featured last month, we decided to try to make this a regular feature.

If you have a case story about a deaf or hard of hearing customer you assisted, and would like to share, we would love to hear from you!

Please also let us know of other relevant topics that may be of interest to you! This newsletter is for you!

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### Trouble-maker?

A very concerned school called, one of their teachers is claiming that they are not being accommodated due to their hearing loss. They seem quite aghast at the thought, as just last year they bought the teacher a special amplified telephone with it's own direct phone line so the teacher could talk to parents. What more does the teacher want or should expect?

The problem here was that while the teacher knew she needed assistance and accommodations, she did not know what she needed, so she could not directly ask for specific accommodations. She could only list her troubles.

Without solutions, the HR department were at a total loss as to how to go about

fixing the problem. They thought that the teacher was being accommodated with the phone and also a classroom aide. They felt that the teacher was being a complainer, trying to get attention, and there really wasn't any issues, Please, could I investigate, and report back as to what is really going on?

Upon my classroom visit, there were indeed some serious issues in the classroom which the HR person didn't realize were valid issues. The teacher had a full load of middle school, emotionally impaired students. Every hour had different students coming and going. She had each student at least twice each day.

For the most part, the students adjusted well to her special needs as a teacher.



Fortunately the room was carpeted, so noise reverberation was not an issue like it is in most classrooms.

The problems were primarily in the classroom environment: There was none of the following:

- Visual notification system for alarms or bells
- Written formats of broadcast announcements

### Other problems included:

*(continued on page 3)*

## What is CART?

Communication options for deaf and hard of hearing people includes a service called CART, an acronym for Communication Access Realtime Translation

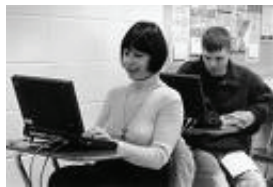
Using stenographic machines and computer software, CART providers translate the

spoken word into the written word nearly as fast as people can talk. Text is displayed on a laptop computer, monitor, or large screen, depending on the situation. CART results in a verbatim (word-for-word) text of all spoken content.

CART specialists can move

from room to room, or event to event, and operate in almost any situation. The captions are projected onto screens appropriate to the audience size and location, as well as over the Internet and via satellite. The text displayed includes (whenever possible) *(continued on page 3)*

## C-Print Vs. CART:



C-print captionist with student behind her.

A related service to CART is C-Print, TypeWell or CAN, (computer assisted note-taking.) These services utilize a person using word prediction software and produce a detailed summary that is not as complete as a CART transcript, but adequate for some situations and preferable in others.. Benefits of C-Print is that it is not as costly as CART, and it will not be word for word, so notes distributed at the end of a class will be far less than notes at the end of a class utilizing CART. Someone who needs assistance in the basic summary of what is happening, or who is not reliant upon the written word exclusively to follow along with

what is being said will usually benefit from C-Print. C-Print has study aids built in, so while the student is reading C-Print, they can use a highlighter to remind themselves of an important piece. They can also type notes that will be linked to that portion of the lecture. The user can also communicate to the C-Print captionist, via the computer chat window. So if she doesn't have clear speech (for example), she can raise her hand, type the question, and the C-Print captionist will voice the question. C-Print was designed with students in mind and can be preferable to CART in those settings. Which to utilize depends on the course content

and the user.

Useful applications might be refresher training courses, some non-major lower level college or high school courses. C-Print can also be done remotely, provided there is adequate microphones, telephone and high speed internet access to make it work. This works best in a lecture or only one speaker situation. Discussion courses, panel speakers, or multiple speakers would be covered best using a person on-site. Complex materials, (higher level or professional level college courses) legal, medical and financial situations would be best served using CART.

*Disclosing hearing loss can be quite stressful for workers who are often fearful of appearing incompetent or less valued if it is discovered they have a hearing loss.*

## Disclosing hearing loss at work

To disclose or not to disclose, that is the question. Disclosing too soon may stall teambuilding and camaraderie with others, especially for younger workers. But not to disclose can be fraught with danger as well. For those in work teams as the worker may appear to be incompetent or not following through if they don't hear dis-

cussions pertaining specifically to their workload. The trick is to disclose without making it a big deal, and getting co-workers, bosses and subordinates comfortable with the hearing loss. They can only be comfortable if the employee is as well. Being matter of fact, and providing hints on how best to communicate can re-

duce communication barriers. Asking for things in written form, (notes, e-mail, IM) are common, reasonable accommodations. Another strategy is to have the person with hearing loss repeat back information to ensure comprehension is easily and readily achievable. Don't forget: Having a sense of humor goes a long way!

## Using Humor to Adapt



*Hmmm, do you think people might remember hearing losses in co-workers if their hearing aids were just slightly more obvious?*

An easy way to get people comfortable with a topic is to use humor. Looking at the bright side of things, or making fun of the situation (*not the person*) can diffuse tension, frustration and apprehension considerably.

There are phrases and sayings I use to remind others that I

don't always hear well. Generally, these are simple misunderstandings and we move on. There is really no-one to blame for it, it just is. One of my favorites is: "Gee, I must be going deaf or something!" when I mishear or don't hear something.

My staff have even added their

own versions of humorous remarks when they don't hear something right: "You're not the only one who doesn't hear everything!"

Yes, we do enjoy a lot of laughs in the middle of serious discussions. It is the only way to get work done!

## CART: *continued*

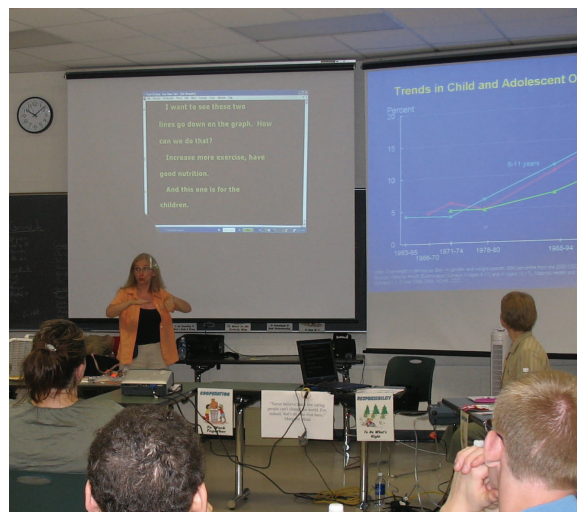
identification of the speaker, dialogue, and a description of sounds. The process is so fast that it enables deaf and hard of hearing consumers to become active participants in classes, workshops, and conferences.

CART has become one of the most requested services for late-deafened adults and individuals with little or no sign language acquisition, and it has gained acceptance with and become a preference for many Deaf individuals in schools, courts and workplace settings. An added benefit of this service is the detailed verbatim record created with the additional leg-

acy of a text file that may be received at the conclusion of the class, lecture or meeting, depending upon the policy of the CART provider and institution.

In certain situations, CART may be provided remotely, high speed Internet is a must, and sometimes a telephone line must also be utilized and is a great option for workers who need to participate in conference calls.

Find CART providers in Michigan at this website:  
<http://cart.ncraonline.org/Directory/Michigan.htm>



*Cart reporter is at top right with stenograph machine, CART is displayed behind speaker on left screen with a LCD projector for an all deaf/hard of hearing audience.*

## Case History: *continued*

Staff meetings were held in a large library with multiple round tables and poles throughout the room, (she was unable to participate or understand meetings) The tiny room where the IEP's were held had solid blank walls and a tile floor, which did nothing to break the sound reverberations. This was a huge problem, even for hearing people. As a partial accommodation, the teacher did have a classroom aide, but the aide was called out frequently to assist in other areas. Other special ed teachers had walkie-talkies direct to the office. Due to her hearing loss, her classroom did not, and they were the farthest from the office. It would take a minimum of five minutes for the aide to run to the office, and summon help,

and return with assistance. This is also assuming the aide was in the room at the time assistance was needed.

### **Recommended solutions:**

- New hearing aids with noise reduction programming
- CART provided at meetings
- Preferable seating at meetings and trainings
- Training videos captioned
- Room change for IEP meetings
- Written school announcements sent prior to the first hour bell
- Flashing door knocker attached to the school bell and fire alarms
- Walkie-Talkie placed in

the classroom, as the teacher could use her voice to request help, even if she couldn't hear responses

The new hearing aid was purchased with the assistance of the local MRS office. Most recommendations were implemented within the next semester, and all were implemented by the next school year.

*When we think of school accommodations, we often think of the student.*

*However, more and more teachers have hearing losses, and to keep them working, they will need to be accommodated in creative ways.*







2929 Covington Court, Suite 200  
Lansing, MI 48912-4939

Phone: 517 487-0066  
Fax: 517 487-2586  
Email: [info@madhh.org](mailto:info@madhh.org)  
Videophone: 517-487-0202

We on the WEB!  
[www.madhh.org](http://www.madhh.org)

*Improving the Quality of Life for all  
Michigan's Citizens with a hearing loss*

## Accommodating hearing losses

*In this dramatic accommodation picture to the right taken at the CEPIN workshop training for first responders and Deaf, hard of hearing and deaf/blind consumers: CART is displayed on the back screen and in large print on the computer monitor on the table. DeafBlind interpreters are on the far right and left. Unseen are: floor audiooops, FM units, CART captioners, and platform interpreters.*



Of all the disabilities, hearing loss is often considered the most difficult to accommodate. This is because it is a very personal disability, and there is a wide range of communication modes and assistive devices and systems available. Some people use American Sign Language, others use Signed Exact English, a tiny minority use Cued Speech, or written communication only, some use no accommodations, other use a combination of speech reading, and sign language, others rely totally on amplification or assistive listening devices, while yet others rely totally on speech reading alone. It is safe to say that one size does not fit all. Most use a combination of several

ways to communicate, depending upon the situation at hand. Most also have primary modes they prefer. Under the American's with Disabilities Act, employers are allowed to chose among equally effective accommodations. Usually, this is interpreted to mean that the employee's preferred mode is picked. However, if there is an equally effective and less expensive accommodation available that would work equally well, then the employer has the right to chose the least expensive. That being said however, it may be difficult for the employer to prove that the other mode is equally effective without the cooperation of the employee. An accommo-

modation that sits unused and in the drawer is not effective. Other accommodations, while inexpensive, can be a burden on the rest of the staff. For example, an employee who turns off their hearing aids to concentrate on work, forcing other staff members to leave their workplace to get their attention, wait for the hearing aid to be turned back on, can be burdensome and irksome for the co-workers. It is best when all parties, explore several accommodations together and find one that suits both the employee, coworkers and employer., realizing that compromises will probably need to be made.

### ***Michigan Association for Deaf and Hard of Hearing:***

*A 77 year old statewide collaborative non-profit dedicated to improving the quality of life for those who are deaf or hard of hearing.*

*Services we offer are statewide interpreter services, sales, rentals and demonstrations of hearing assistive technology. We provide workshops on Deaf Culture, Adapting to a Hearing Loss, accommodations for Deaf and Hard of Hearing for service providers in the Medical, Legal, Educational, and Recreational arenas, including first responders, hospitals, courts and police.*

*We are funded by donations, fee for services, grants, some local united ways, local Lions Clubs, and an MRS contract to guide MRS counselors. We are here to help you serve your consumers! Call or e-mail us!*